

CLEARING SPACE FOR EXTREME PSYCHOLOGISM ABOUT REASONS

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ABSTRACT: Are reasons for action facts or psychological states? There are two answers in the literature on the ontology of reasons. According to the Standard Story, normative reasons are facts, while motivating reasons are psychological states. According to the factualist, both normative and motivating reasons are facts. In this paper I argue that neither of these views is satisfactory. The Standard Story errs in thinking that the two kinds of reasons are different ontological entities. The factualist gets this right, but incurs some distasteful ontological commitments by thinking of motivating reasons as facts. We should, thus, give a proper hearing to the only serious logically possible alternative to the two existing views: both motivating and normative reasons are psychological states.

Suppose I bought you a bunch of proteas. If you wanted to *explain* this action, you would need to find out what *my* reasons for it were. If you wanted to see whether my action is *justified*, you would need to know whether these reasons are *good*. The first kind of reasons - *motivating* reasons - explain an action by showing what the agent saw in favour of it. The second kind of reasons - *normative* reasons - justify the action in virtue of actually favouring it. A central question in metaethics is what the ontology of these two kinds of reasons is. There are two answers in the literature.

According to the Standard Story, motivating and normative reasons are two different ontological entities: the former are psychological states; the latter are facts. Thus, my motivating reason for buying you proteas was, say, my belief that this will please you. The normative reason, when there is such a reason, is the fact that this will please you (e.g., Raz 1999, Setiya 2007, Smith 1994, Wallace 2003)¹.

In the last two decades, this story has come under considerable pressure from so-called factualists about reasons. Contra the Standard Story, these philosophers insist, the following thesis is true:

SAME: Normative and motivating reasons are of the same ontological kind.

But, they continue, since normative reasons are facts, so must be motivating reasons. Thus, the normative reason for me to buy you proteas, on this picture, is the fact that this will please you. When I act for a good reason, this fact is also my motivating reason (e.g., Alvarez 2010, Collins 1997, Dancy 2000).

In this paper, I argue that both of these views of reasons are *prima facie* implausible. This clears space for the only serious logically possible alternative to them: both normative and motivating

¹ Traditionally, the Story also involved the thesis that the relevant psychological states are belief-desire pairs (e.g., Davidson 2001). This thesis is viewed with suspicion nowadays, so I stick to beliefs in what follows.

reasons are psychological states. Call this view 'extreme psychologism'. As far as I know, no one (yet) holds it². And if it is so much as mentioned in the literature, it is summarily dismissed as too extreme to be plausible (see § 2 below).

I show here that this dismissal is much too hasty. The argument starts by teaming up with the factualist against the Standard Story, and then turns the tables on factualism. It is this:

(P1)^{CLEAR-SPACE} **SAME:** Normative and motivating reasons are of the same ontological kind (§ 1).

(P2)^{CLEAR-SPACE} Thinking of motivating reasons as facts incurs ontological commitments that are both implausible and ill-supported by factualism's friends (§ 2).

(C1)^{CLEAR-SPACE} So, both the Standard Story and factualism are *prima facie* implausible.

(P3)^{CLEAR-SPACE} The only serious logically possible alternative left is extreme psychologism (§ 3).

(C)^{CLEAR-SPACE} So, we should give extreme psychologism a proper hearing.

Call this 'the space-clearing argument for extreme psychologism'.

As should be clear from the conclusion, the argument is not meant to be dispositive. For *that* kind of argument, we would need to hear positive reasons for thinking that both motivating and normative reasons are psychological states. This is not the aim here³. The aim, rather, is to show popular opinion mistaken in dismissing extreme psychologism out of hand⁴. This is a modest conclusion, but if I am right, it is an important one to have in place before we can so much as hope for a plausible account of reasons. It may be that we shouldn't hope. But if we are to, extreme psychologism is the place to look.

1. **(P1)**^{CLEAR-SPACE}

The first premise of the overarching argument says that normative and motivating reasons are of the same ontological kind (SAME). Factualists have offered several convincing arguments for this claim (e.g., Collins 1997, Dancy 2000). Here I focus on Maria Alvarez's as the quickest way of cutting to the chase (2010: 32-33)⁵. It goes like this:

² It may be thought that internalists such as Bernard Williams (e.g., 1981) are extreme psychologists. (Thanks to an anonymous *SAJP* reviewer for this point.) But I think that this is a mistake. Internalists require that for R to be a normative reason to ϕ , it must be possible for one of the following *beliefs* to move me to ϕ - my belief that R, or my belief that R is a reason for me to ϕ . This is how Williams is standardly read (e.g., Finlay 2009 and Shah 2006, respectively). R here is a *fact* - either about the world or about my desires; while the motivating reason is the belief itself. Thus this view is a version of the Standard Story. Put the difference like this: internalist friends of the Standard Story place a motivation condition on the *applicability* of normative reasons. Extreme psychologism insists that the normative reason *itself* must be capable of being a motivating reason.

³ I provide such reasons in [Author].

⁴ Many thanks to an anonymous *SAJP* reviewer for making me realise that I was overstating my case in a previous draft, as well as for very helpful suggestions as to how to avoid doing so.

⁵ Many thanks to Maria Alvarez for helping me understand the argument better in an email exchange. In what follows I draw on this exchange as well as on Alvarez (2010).

(P1)^{SAME} It's implausible that a thing should change ontological categories depending on the role it plays in a particular context.

(P2)^{SAME} The very same reason can play a variety of roles depending on context – it can justify, motivate, and explain action.

(C)^{SAME} Therefore, motivating and normative reasons are of the same ontological kind.

I now defend each premise in turn.

1.1 (P1)^{SAME}

Although Alvarez doesn't defend (P1)^{SAME} at any length, the premise enjoys considerable intuitive plausibility. Suppose (not her example) that Baingana drives home from work to his family. His roles switch from a lawyer (say) to a husband and father. Does he suddenly change ontologies half way home, being one ontological entity at the office and two new ones at home? And when he stops for petrol on the way and becomes a customer? And when he acts the model citizen and picks up a bit of litter from the sidewalk?

We would be, ludicrously, forced to say 'yes' if a change of role brought about a change in ontology. This would be to work Baingana rather hard through all these ontological transformations on a single drive home. Worse, we would make it a mystery how *he* is playing all of these roles. That is, unless Baingana remained the same ontological entity on the way home, it wouldn't be Baingana playing the roles of lawyer, customer, model citizen, husband, and father, in each of these contexts.

Put the point differently. Playing a particular role gives you certain relational properties. But things don't change ontology by virtue of acquiring new relational properties⁶. Suppose I am two metres away from you. When I move closer to give you a hug, I lose the relational property of being two metres away from you, and acquire a new one – of being in your arms. Have I changed ontologies? Patently, no. Or it wouldn't be *me* in your arms. The same goes for Baingana. This is just what (P1)^{SAME} says: things don't change ontologies if they acquire the new relational property of playing a role in a context.

1.2 (P2)^{SAME}

The second premise of Alvarez's argument says that the very same reason can play a variety of roles depending on context – it can justify, motivate, and explain action. Alvarez offers several helpful examples. Here is one:

⁶ I appreciate that on certain views, such as many forms of Ubuntu and communitarianism, this might be a more problematic claim than I make it sound here, especially when it comes to social-role relational properties.

[T]hat there has been a drop in temperature can be a reason for me to bring my tulips in (justifying), it can be the reason for which Mrs B brought in her tulips (motivating), and it can also be the reason that explains why Mrs B brought in her tulips (explanatory) as well as the reason why, since I didn't bring them in, my tulips died (explanatory) (2010: 36; see also 45-6).

Although Alvarez thinks that all reasons are facts, and thus the thing playing these roles in her example is a fact, (P2)^{SAME} itself is neutral on the ontology of reasons. We can easily come up with an example featuring psychological states. Thus, we could say the following:

My *belief* that there is life on Mars can be a reason for me to book a seat on the next shuttle there (justifying), it can be the reason for which I have done so (motivating), and it can also be the reason which explains why I have done so (explanatory) as well as the reason why, since the belief makes me weird, I no longer have any friends (explanatory).

The ease with which we can generate examples featuring either facts or psychological states is a clear sign that the premise such examples support is neutral between factualism and extreme psychologism. This is good news, since SAME is the first premise of the space-clearing argument for extreme psychologism. So the *argument* for SAME had better be neutral on the ontology of reasons.

What else can we say in favour of (P2)^{SAME}, apart from citing examples of the same thing playing different reason-roles? Alvarez's own argument won't help me here, because it works in support of both (P2)^{SAME} and factualism. But there are at least two other, ontology-neutral, ways of bolstering the premise.

The first is to recall the discussion of (P1)^{SAME} (§ 1.1). Things don't change ontologies, I argued, when their relational properties change. This point automatically goes for whatever it is that plays the role of a reason. Now it is something that favours bringing your tulips in; then it is something that you think favours bringing them in; finally (and consequently), it is something we cite to explain your action. We have described a series of relational properties of this something. There is no reason to think that the something itself has changed ontologies.

This is how philosophers tend to think of the concept of a reason in any case. Suppose that normative reasons are facts (so as not to beg any questions). Certain facts are only reasons in some contexts for someone. The fact that it is sunny, for instance, is a reason for Lindiwe (who got sunstroke yesterday) to stay at home, but for Pedro and me (who love the sun) to drink coffee by the pool. The bare fact that it is sunny, in other words, is not a normative reason until it enters into some relation with an action and an actor. Thus, being a normative reason is a relational property of these facts. But, as we agreed, a change in relational properties doesn't bring about a change in ontology.

The second way to support (P2)^{SAME} is due to Jonathan Dancy (2000: 103). The reason one and the same thing can play the role of motivating and normative reason is simply that sometimes people

act for good reasons. Thus, when we explain someone's action, and then commend it as justified, our explanation must cite something that in fact favours the action. This something is, of course, the normative reason for the action. Suppose again reasons are facts. We say that Mrs B brought in her tulips because the temperature dropped (motivating reason) and that this was a good, or justified, thing to do, because a drop in temperature favours bringing your tulips in (assuming you are fond of them). In saying what was good about the action, we have cited the normative reason for it. And that is exactly the same, when the action is justified, as Mrs B's motivating reason.

None of this is to say that we can't act for bad reasons. It is just to say that since *sometimes* the same thing plays both roles, it's implausible to think that this thing changes ontologies in mid-flight: whenever our interest is in explanation it's one thing, whenever we are talking about justification it becomes another.

Alvarez's argument, thus, confers at the very least *prima facie* plausibility on the first premise of the space-clearing argument for extreme psychologism. The same thing can play the role of motivating and normative reason, (P2)^{SAME}. Since things don't change ontologies depending on context – (P1)^{SAME} – the two types of reason must be of the same ontological kind, (C)^{SAME}. If so, we get the first half of (C1)^{CLEAR-SPACE}: the Standard Story, on which the two kinds of reasons have *different* ontologies, is *prima facie* implausible.

2. (P2)^{CLEAR-SPACE}

The second premise of the space-clearing argument for extreme psychologism targets factualism. The premise says that thinking of motivating reasons as facts incurs ontological commitments that are both implausible and ill-supported by factualism's friends.

Let me start by saying a bit more about why the factualist thinks that motivating reasons are facts. I take Dancy as an example this time. The argument goes by elimination. There are three possible ontologies for reasons: (what I have called) extreme psychologism, factualism, and the Standard Story (2000: 99-100). The first view, Dancy merely deigns to assert, is 'clearly implausible. It is implausible because it is so extreme' (2000: 100). This is the typical valuation of the view's prospects, in both tenor and length (e.g., Hieronymi 2011: 412, fn. 13), assuming that it is so much as mentioned. The Standard Story, too, is untenable: it treats normative and motivating reasons as different ontological kinds, and thus violates (what I called) SAME (2000: 106). Since the three views are our only theoretical options, we should be factualists.

I agree that these are our only options. This is what (P3)^{CLEAR-SPACE} says. And, of course, I agree that SAME is right. This is what (P1)^{CLEAR-SPACE} says. But, I now argue, factualism saddles us with three ontological commitments which are both ill-motivated and ill-advised. So, the factualist has to do better than this glib dismissal of extreme psychologism. Dancy is the only factualist who explicitly acknowledges all of these commitments. But no factualist can avoid them as long as she also endorses SAME (e.g., Alvarez 2010, Collins 1997). Here they are:

- (1)^{FACT} Explanations of action aren't factive (2000: Chap. 6).
- (2)^{FACT} Motivating reasons aren't causes (2000: Chap. 8).
- (3)^{FACT} Beliefs about one's reasons and the world are merely enabling conditions (2000: Chap. 6).

2.1 (1)^{FACT}: Explanations aren't factive

(1)^{FACT} means that in cases when you act on the basis of a false belief, we explain your action by appeal to 'facts' that don't obtain. Suppose I had an imaginary friend, Luke Skywalker, of whose fictional status I had lost sight through some sad accident. Suppose, next, that I bought Luke a cake for his 'birthday'. How do you explain my action? If you are a factualist, you will have to appeal to the *fact* that it is Luke's birthday. But according to (1)^{FACT}, this explanation in terms of a fact, entails the existence of neither Luke nor his birthday. Here is Dancy:

I suggest that locutions such as

His reason for doing it was that it would increase his pension

The ground on which he acted was that she had lied to him

are not factive (2000: 132).

And his rationale:

The point of all this is, of course, that if reasons-explanations are not factive there is no need to turn to 'that he believed that *p*' as the agent's reason wherever it is not the case that *p* (2003: 427).

Turning to 'that he believed that *p*', the factualist feels, gets us decoyed into the Standard Story. The main rationale for this Story is that in cases where the agent misperceives the facts, her reason can't be a fact but must be her (false) belief. But then it makes sense to think of all motivating reasons as mental states. The factualist is anxious to block this move. The first step is to claim that motivating reasons are facts. Since, however, this doesn't make the problem of acting on false belief go away, the factualist needs to say that in such cases something's being a fact doesn't entail that its constituents exist.

Any factualist who also buys SAME incurs this commitment: we explain action in terms of motivating reasons; but motivating reasons are facts, since they have the same ontology as normative

reasons (SAME), and normative reasons are facts. This means that the locus of your explanation of my action (buying Luke cake) in terms of *facts* (it's Luke's birthday) can be something that *does not exist* (Luke and his birthday)⁷. Facts themselves, in other words, are not factive. I take it that this is strange indeed. And even Dancy concedes that 'the Non-factive View is definitely out on a limb' (2011: 349).

The View is not only out on a limb, but is also ill-supported by its best friends. Dancy (2011) defends it in two moves. The first is to argue that we usually establish the correctness of factivity claims by showing that treating a certain concept as non-factive results in 'uninterpretable' sentences. But doing so with explanations in terms of motivating reasons doesn't:

[T]he normal way of showing that a concept is factive is by offering examples that do not seem to make sense. Knowledge is factive, because "he knows that it is raining but it is not" is uninterpretable... And the same applies to "he is running because the train is leaving, but it is not leaving." But it does not seem to apply to all forms of reasons-explanation of action. For example, it does not apply to "His reason for running is that the train is leaving, but in fact it is late and has not even arrived yet" (2011: 349).

The conclusion is that since explanations in terms of motivating reasons do not exhibit a criterial feature of factivity, they are not factive.

But this sort of reasoning leaves much to be desired. For starters, one might reasonably think that the sentence 'His reason for running is that the train is leaving, but in fact it is late and has not even arrived yet' indeed does not make sense. This linguistic intuition would be bolstered by noting that both 'He is running because the train is leaving' and 'His reason for running is that the train is leaving' are explanations that cite the agent's motivating reason. Yet, Dancy thinks that the first is factive while the second is not. This, however, doesn't make sense if both are explanations of the same action and cite the same reason. So, those who share Dancy's linguistic intuition owe us an account of what distinguishes the two kinds of explanation, given that they are both supposed to pick out the same (agent's) reason.

Dancy tries to come up with such an account (and this is his second move). Locutions of the second kind ('He was running because...') are factive ways of expressing reason-explanations; but, he insists, 'they are factive not because they are reasons-explanations but because of the factive pressure of the word "because"' (2011: 350).

How is this supposed to work, though? Dancy can't deny that 'his reason for running' is supposed to pick out the agent's (motivating) reason. This claim is the crux of his argument for the thesis that an agent's reasons must be of the same ontological kind as normative reasons. (I gestured at

⁷ Why not retain the factivity of explanation by saying that the motivating reason is the *fact* that the agent (falsely) believed such and such? Dancy thinks of this view as a version of psychologism and rejects it (2000: 124). See [Author] for why he is right to do so.

this argument in § 1.2.) If her reasons weren't of the same ontological kind as normative reasons, the argument goes, then no one could act for a good reason (2000: 103). Dancy equally can't afford to deny that the agent's reason is a fact, though, since he is committed to both SAME and the idea that normative reasons are facts. Together, these theses entail that motivating reasons are facts.

So, the linguistic intuition Dancy is having in the cited passage is either about reasons other than motivating ones in the case of 'His reason for running is that the train is leaving', or SAME has been secretly abandoned. The former would be strange, for the possibility of error is precisely what motivates a non-factive view of reasons-explanations. So, it would be weird to maintain that the non-factive things aren't motivating reasons while retaining the thesis that explanations aren't factive.

The second option of secretly abandoning SAME would be stranger still, for it is the main motivation for factualism. The argument, recall, was that once we have established SAME, it follows that motivating reasons are facts, since normative reasons are facts.

The upshot is that the factualist who is committed to the non-factivity of reasons-explanations must deny that facts themselves are factive. Not only is this denial intuitively implausible, but we also haven't heard a good argument for why we should go along with it.

2.2 (2)^{FACT}: Reasons aren't causes

The claim that reasons are not causes is a direct consequence of (1)^{FACT}. Recall imaginary Luke: my reason for buying him a cake, according to the factualist, was the *fact* that it is Luke's birthday. Since, however, Luke doesn't exist, the 'fact' of its being his birthday could have hardly caused me to do anything. Thus, reasons, which can be such 'facts', can't be causes.

The axe that's really being ground here is made explicit by Alvarez when she diagnoses the Standard Story as kindled by the commitment to reasons as causes:

[O]n the most prevalent views of causation, if reasons are to be causes...of actions, they must be mental events or states and not facts or true propositions (Alvarez 2010: 50).

Once we reject this commitment, Alvarez argues, there is no longer any obstacle to viewing motivating reasons as facts. Unfortunately, she doesn't offer any argument about why we *should* reject the commitment. The only reason we are given is that unless we rejected it, we would be forced to cite the agent's mental states in order to explain her actions. This, however, is an *explanation* of why someone would want to eschew the commitment, not an argument for why it should be eschewed.

What of Dancy's own arguments? He develops two (2000: 160-1). The more decisive one (according to him) starts with the truism that causal explanations are factive: unless the cause obtains, the explanation is incorrect (Dancy 2011: 349-350). But since action-explanations, according to the factualist, aren't factive, and action-explanations are in terms of reasons, reasons can't be causes. But,

once again, while this reasoning is fine as an *explanation* of why someone would think something like that, it can hardly constitute an *argument* for thinking that way. If anything, it sounds like a good *reductio* argument for rejecting the non-factivity of explanation. And Dancy is aware of this (ibid.).

Dancy's second argument is the 'suspicion' that normative facts in general can't be causes. Thus, Dancy says, it is strange to suppose that a body can 'be caused to move by the fact that one person owes another a favour' (ibid.). The thinking goes something like this:

(P1)^{NOT-CAUSES} Normative and motivating reasons are of the same ontological kind (SAME).

(C1)^{NOT-CAUSES} So, if motivating reasons are causes, then normative reasons, too, are causes.

(P2)^{NOT-CAUSES} Normative reasons are normative facts.

(P3)^{NOT-CAUSES} Normative facts can't be causes.

(C2)^{NOT-CAUSES} So, normative reasons can't be causes (from (P2)^{NOT-CAUSES} and (P3)^{NOT-CAUSES}).

(C)^{NOT-CAUSES} So, motivating reasons can't be causes (from (C1)^{NOT-CAUSES} and (C2)^{NOT-CAUSES}).

Now, as a SAME-fan, I am sympathetic to both (P1)^{NOT-CAUSES} and (C1)^{NOT-CAUSES}, but I think that the rest of the argument flounders. For lack of space, I will just focus here on the low-hanging fruit - (P2)^{NOT-CAUSES}.

Why should we think that normative reasons are *normative* facts? Let us, once again, pretend to be factualists. The fact that it is Bob's birthday is a normative reason for his boyfriend to throw him a surprise party. The fact that Joe's big sister made him cry again is a normative reason for their mum to give her a talking-to. Although these facts constitute normative reasons, they are not themselves *normative* facts. They are plain old facts: it's Bob's birthday; Joe's sister made him cry. And these plain old facts are the ones that Dancy himself uses as examples of normative reasons throughout his work: a train is leaving; someone's pension fund swells; someone tells a lie. Moreover, he agrees that such facts aren't normative (1995: 6).

So, we shouldn't grant (P2)^{NOT-CAUSES}, the claim that *all* normative reasons are normative facts, even if we granted the central factualist tenet that all such reasons are facts. If we don't grant (P2)^{NOT-CAUSES}, however, (C2)^{NOT-CAUSES} no longer follows. Since some reasons aren't normative facts, they *can* be causes. We are, hence, free to reject the argument's conclusion that motivating reasons aren't causes.

The upshot is that the claim that motivating reasons aren't causes is ill-supported by its friends. We either get no argument for it (Alvarez, Dancy's first argument), or a shaky one (Dancy's second argument).

2.3 (3)^{FACT}: Beliefs are enabling conditions

The third thesis to which the factualist is committed is that one's beliefs about reasons and the world are merely enabling conditions for the explanation of one's actions. Enabling conditions are conditions that are necessary for something to occur, but which we don't take to be an *essential* part of the explanation of the occurrence. Suppose we were trying to explain why the fire started in the dog parlour. One enabling condition is the presence of oxygen in the room where it started. Another is that the parlour exists. But we wouldn't cite either as part of the explanation of the fire. Consider: 'Why did the fire start in the dog parlour?' 'Because there was a dog parlour.' (See also Turri 2009.) Rather, we would cite the fact, say, that an incompetent smoker set fire to the curtains.

Dancy's idea is similar: our beliefs about our reasons and the world are like the oxygen and dog parlour – the beliefs have to be there in order for our reasons to move us and explain our actions, but they are not themselves our reasons; our reasons are facts. Such facts are the only essential ingredients of the explanation of action. Thus, to go back to our original example, my motivating reason for getting you proteas is the fact that this will please you. What needs to be in place for this explanation to work is that I *believed* that proteas will please you. But the belief isn't an essential part of the explanation.

The thesis is necessary to make sense of the truism – which the factualist concedes - that we act and believe based on the facts *as we take them to be*. The only way for the factualist to make room for the agent's perspective (while remaining a factualist) is to treat beliefs as extrinsic to reasons-explanations. Since the beliefs are, nonetheless, necessary for the explanation to go through, she demotes them to enabling conditions. Note again, that this is an *explanation* of why the factualist is committed to the thesis, not an argument for it.

Treating our psychological perspective as inessential to the explanation of our actions, however, simply seems to miss the point of such explanation. The point is to tell us what the agent *saw* in favour of the action. But on this story, her seeing things one way or another doesn't seem to matter much. Mention of our beliefs about what we are up to can as easily be skipped here as mention of oxygen and the existence of the dog parlour is typically omitted in the explanation of why the fire started in the dog parlour.

2.4 Stock-taking

These three commitments taken together yield a rather curious view of things. The best argument for factualism, as mentioned at the beginning of this paper, is a combination of SAME and the traditional idea that normative reasons are facts. The appeal of this idea lies in the intuition that if they weren't, there would be nothing to make them normative or good, since they would then be a subjective

matter. So, the rationale for factualism is to hook us up to the world through our reasons. But if explanations aren't factive, and reasons aren't causes, then we lose precisely this connection to the world. For, if reasons aren't causes then, even when they obtain, they aren't something through which we connect to the world.

Recall that my motivating reason for buying you proteas, according to the factualist, is the fact that doing so will please you. By (2)^{FACT}, however, this fact, even when there is such a fact, is not the cause of my action. What is? Perhaps it is my belief that this will please you, or perhaps the desire to please you, or both. But by (3)^{FACT}, these psychological states are merely enabling conditions. So, the thing that causes me to act is neither the *normative* reason nor *my* reason, but some enabling condition. But then how does the world affect me through my reasons? It would appear it doesn't. It affects my beliefs and desires, yes, but these are neither my reasons nor something essential to the explanation of my action.

3. (P3)^{CLEAR-SPACE}

If these thoughts are on the right track, we have gotten as far as the intermediate conclusion of the space-clearing argument for extreme psychologism, (C1)^{CLEAR-SPACE}: both the Standard Story and factualism are *prima facie* implausible (§ 1 and § 2 respectively).

The last premise that needs defence is the claim that extreme psychologism is the only serious logically possible alternative to these two views. Establishing this claim involves showing two things: that the fourth logical possibility is not a serious option, and that extreme psychologism is.

The fourth logical possibility is that normative reasons are psychological states, while motivating reasons are facts. I think it is fairly easy to see that this isn't a serious theoretical option. If there is an ontological asymmetry between normative and motivating reasons, it needs to go the other way, reflecting the fact that normative reasons essentially track the world, while motivating reasons essentially track the agent's perspective. This is a conceptual point: normative reasons, we said in the opening lines of this paper, are the things that *actually* favour an action, while motivating reasons are things that the agent *saw as* favouring the action. The fourth view gets things exactly the wrong way around. There can be no theoretical motivation for getting things quite so backward.

It remains to be seen that extreme psychologism is, by contrast, a serious theoretical option. To reiterate, the point here isn't to give a positive argument for extreme psychologism, just to convince you that the view is in with a chance. This means that, at the very least, it shouldn't face any of the problems that bedevil the other views. And, indeed, it doesn't.

First, extreme psychologism doesn't breach SAME, so it isn't liable to the problem with the Standard Story.

Second, the view has none of the odd consequences about motivating reasons that factualism was shown to have in the last section. According to extreme psychologism:

- (1)^{E-PSYCH} Explanations entail the existence of their explanans.
Your explanation of my buying cake for imaginary Luke and proteas for you, by appeal to my *beliefs* that it is Luke's birthday and that proteas would please you, entails that I *believed* these things about Luke and you.
- (2)^{E-PSYCH} Reasons are (non-deviant) causes.
My belief that it's Luke's birthday caused me to buy him cake; my belief that getting you proteas would please you caused me to get you some.
- (3)^{E-PSYCH} My beliefs about the world are not some explanatory danglers. They are the things that move me to action.

This picture, you hopefully agree, chimes better with our intuitive understanding of *motivating* reasons and action-explanations. But it still leaves a question about *normative* reasons unanswered: what about the intuition, shared by factualism and the Standard Story, that such reasons are objective, that they *in fact* favour our actions and are not up to us but up to the world?

I have developed a lengthy answer to this question elsewhere [Author]. Here I just want to gesture at the resources the extreme psychologist has for answering it. The trick is to make our extreme psychologism 'truthy': when the beliefs above are *true*, they are *good* reasons for my actions⁸. What makes it the case that there is *no* normative reason for me to buy imaginary Luke cake is the *falsity* of my belief that it's his birthday. What makes it the case that *there is* a normative reason for me to give you proteas is the *truth* of my belief that this will please you. So it is still true that our good reasons are given to us by the world.

Not only does extreme psychologism honour the objectivity of normative reasons, but, unlike the two existing views, it allows these reasons to causally affect us. The Standard Story makes it a mystery how I can act for a good reason, given that my reasons are different in kind from good reasons (§ 1.2). And factualism makes it difficult to see how reasons can have a causal impact on me (§ 2.4). Extreme psychologism, by contrast, easily answers these questions. It is precisely because normative and motivating reasons are of the same ontological kind that I can act for the good reason there is for me to so act. And since reasons are causes, the world can – and patently does – affect me through good reasons.

⁸ Of course, such a move is also open to the fourth logical possibility. But this wouldn't help much, as it still places the stronger connection to the world in the wrong place – in motivating, rather than in normative, reasons.

In this way, extreme psychologism can give us everything we want from a view of reasons: we do justice to SAME; we preserve the intuition that our reasons are the springs of our actions; and we honour both the causal role and the objectivity of normative reasons. Hence it is a serious alternative to the two existing views (§ 3). Since we have also established a presumption against these views (§§ 1-2), it looks like extreme psychologism at the very least holds the promise of showing us the way to a plausible view of reasons.

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